

NIGHT OF THE KINGS

Directed by Philippe Lacôte



93 minutes / France, Ivory Coast, Canada, Sénégal / French, Dioula, Nouchi (Ivorian slang)
Sound 5.1 / Aspect ratio 2.39



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SYNOPSIS

A young man is sent to "La Maca", a prison in the middle of the Ivorian forest ruled by its inmates. As tradition goes with the rising of the red moon, he is designated by the Boss to be the new "Roman" and must tell a story to the other prisoners. Learning what fate awaits him, he begins to narrate the mystical life of the legendary outlaw named "Zama King" and has no choice but to make his story last until dawn.

DIRECTOR – Philippe Lacôte



PHILIPPE LACÔTE grew up in Abidjan near a movie theater – the «Magic». His work as a director has taken on several forms, before focusing in 2002 on the recent history of his country with *CHRONICLES OF WAR IN THE IVORY COAST*, a film on the edge between a documentary and a diary. It is followed by the feature film *RUN*, the story of a wandering madman, selected in Cannes Un Certain Regard 2014. This selection confirmed his talent as a filmmaker and revealed a new voice from the African continent. *NIGHT OF THE KINGS* (original title "La Nuit Des Rois"), his second feature, is a dive into the largest prison in West Africa, during a night of red moon.

FILMOGRAPHY:

SLAVERY ROUTES - documentary series, 4 x 52 mins, 2018

Co-directed with Juan Gélas. Prod: Compagnie des Phares et Balises, Kwassa Films and LX Filme. Coproduction: ARTE France and RTBF

RUN – feature film, 100 mins, 2014

Production: Banshee Films, Wassakara Productions and ARTE France
Cannes Film Festival 2014 – Un Certain Regard

TO REPEL GHOSTS – short film, 20 mins, 2013

Production: Wassakara Productions, Banshee Films and Big World Cinema.
Durban International Film Festival, TIFF

CHRONICLES OF WAR IN THE IVORY COAST - documentary, 52 mins, 2008

Prod: Wassakara Productions and G.R.E.C.
Festival del Cinema Africano, d'Asia e America Latina (Milano), Vues d'Afrique (Montréal)

THE MESSENGER – short film, 35 mm, 17 mins, 2006

Prod: Banshee Films
Rotterdam International Film Festival

CAIRO HOURS - documentary, 52 mins, 2003

Prod: La Huit Productions
Les Ecrans documentaires (Arcueil)

AFFAIRE LIBINSKI – short film, 35 mm, 13 mins, 2001

Co-directed with Delphine Jaquet. Prod: G.R.E.C.
Festival du film court en plein air (Grenoble), Entrevues Belfort

SOMNAMBULE – short film, 16 mm, 14 mins, 1996

Prod: Sadepan



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

My work as a director has taken on several forms, before focusing over the last few years on the Ivory Coast with *CHRONICLES OF WAR IN THE IVORY COAST*, a film on the edge between a documentary, an intimate story and a journal, followed by the feature film *RUN*, the story of a young man who transforms himself into a wandering madman in order to assassinate his country's Prime Minister.

These two films enabled me to determine the exact position from which I want to question the recent history of the Ivory Coast. But my approach is not simply social or political. My goal is to anchor these realities in a specific imaginative world of this country and its culture. This position was my starting point, and represents the origin of my outlook.

Night Of The Kings

With *NIGHT OF THE KINGS* I wanted to observe post-war Ivorian society through the prism of the largest prison in the country: MACA. This prison is a place of which I still have strong images and which has long fascinated me. As a child, I'd go once a week along the edge of Banco Forest in a collective taxi to go visit my mother who was incarcerated there for political reasons. As there are no visiting rooms at MACA, I waited among the prisoners who freely circulated amid the group of visitors. It was a world that I loved to observe, even if I wasn't able to decode everything. I had the impression of being at the court of some archaic kingdom with all its princes and lackeys...The film is centered on this singular set.

A night of red moon

Inside the prison, we plunge into a society with its own laws and rites. One of these rituals, as old as the world itself, is telling stories at night in the gleam of a lamp... The entire film takes place over the course of a night of red moon. The sky, as observed by the character named "Lookout", takes on a strange hue reflected inside the prison, bestowing on this night a special dimension.



Roman

In *NIGHT OF THE KINGS*, the prison is above all a place of storytelling. Roman is the name given to the young man whose portrait I weave, who lives only as long as he tells stories. The film is told from the point of view of his urgency, and through his stories that recall those of a Thousand and One Arabian Nights.

Roman unfurls a vast tale which takes up a collective story with an individual trajectory and real characters. This adds to it a fantasized, extravagant dimension. The word thus becomes an instrument of liberation, a talisman to confront death.

An African imaginative world

The imaginative world of the territory which I like to film includes visions and hallucinations, while freely moving between realism and supernatural. Through Roman's stories, the epic dimension of the film unfurls, borne along by great spaces, filmed with broad camera

movements. The emblematic sequence of the combat between the Queen and Young King translates all the power of Roman's story. It was recreated using digital reproductive effects and transforming the protagonists into animals. This sequence, while possessing a real visual and narrative force, is critical, for it translates a manner of seeing the world, and the imaginative and mystic universe of an entire continent.

Through *NIGHT OF THE KINGS*, we realise that Africa is perhaps the very last antique theatre of today, where tragedy and stakes of power unfurl in a raw, frontal and eminently visual manner.



CAST

Roman: Koné Bakary

Barbe Noire (Blackbeard): Steve Tientcheu (*Les Misérables*)

Soni: Rasmané Ouédraogo

Nivaquine: Issaka Sawadogo

Demi Fou (Half-Mad): Digbeu Jean Cyrille

Lass: Abdoul Karim Konaté (*Run*)

Lame de rasoir (Razor Blade): Anzian Marcel

La Reine (the Queen): Laetitia Ky

Silence : Denis Lavant (*Holy Motors*)

CREW

Scriptwriter: Philippe Lacôte

Director: Philippe Lacôte

Producers: Delphine Jaquet, Yanick Létourneau, Ernest Konan and Yoro Mbaye

D.O.P.: Tobie Marier Robitaille CSC

Set designer: Samuel Teisseire

Editor: Aube Foglia

Original music: Olivier Alary

Sound mixer: Pierre-Jules Audet, Emmanuel Croset

Costume designer: Hanna Sjödin

First assistant director : Franck Heslon

Production companies: Banshee Films (France), in coproduction with Wassakara Productions (Côte d'Ivoire), Peripheria (Canada), Yennenga Production (Sénégal)

PRODUCTION COMPANIES

BANSHEE FILMS - France

Banshee Films is a French independent production company, which defends original styles in filmmaking and contributes to the emergence of new talent. Since its creation in 2003, the company has produced about a dozen shorts and documentaries, and two feature films selected in international festivals, including Philippe Lacôte's first feature RUN (Cannes Un Certain Regard 2014).

WASSAKARA PRODUCTIONS - Ivory Coast

The objective of Wassakara Productions is to support films by directors from West Africa. The company first of all initiated production workshops before producing documentaries. It took a further step with the production of BURN IT UP DJASSA, a low budget feature shown in major international festivals (TIFF, Berlinale). Then the production of RUN, which premiered at Cannes 2014, and represented Ivory Coast at the 88th Oscars.

PERIPHERIA - Canada

Peripheria is a film production company cofounded by Yanick Létourneau with a mission to produce inspiring and entertaining director-driven stories for local and international audiences. The company has been focusing since 2009 on feature films and international coproductions, recently completing LEMONADE (Berlinale 2018) by Ioana Uricaru, lead produced by Cristian Mungiu from Mobra Films (Romania), in coproduction with 42Film (Germany) and Filmgate (Sweden) as well as X500 (TIFF 2016) by Juan Andrés Arango, lead produced by Peripheria in coproduction with Septima in Colombia and Machette in Mexico. Peripheria is currently coproducing Robert Guédiguian upcoming feature, "Twist in Bamako" with Agat Films in France, to be released in 2021.

